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I am currently the president of the Mission Valley Hangar (aka chapter) of the Montana Pilots' Association which has about 700 members.

I am also currently the president of Lake County Chapter #1122 of the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA). The EAA is a national organization with a membership of about 200,000 and our local chapter numbers 43.

I am here today representing these two organizations in support of SB 318, an act amending Montana's recreational use statute to provide limited liability to landowners who provide airstrips for public use without valuable consideration.

I have been an active pilot and aircraft owner for 55 years and currently own a Cessna 180 and am building an owner built aircraft (aka homebuilt). I have been involved in aviation, in one way or another, through out this country as well as the U.K. and Hong Kong.

The litigious nature of our society has had disastrous affects on the aircraft industry, in general, and general aviation, in particular. Cessna aircraft was forced out of the single airplane business for over a decade because of product liability insurance costs. The perception is that an aircraft owner is "RICH" and, if you own a ranch with a landing strip as well as an airplane; well, you've got to be "DOUBLY RICH", but nothing is further from truth. It is a sport for us just like skiing, motorcycling or boating are for others.

Montana landowners are currently protected under Montana's recreational use statute for a large variety of recreational activities, but not aviation. In Montana there are airstrip property owners who would like to permit the private, non-commercial use of their airstrips for recreational purposes but have concerns about liability. As well, there are others who are considering closing their airfields to public use because of concerns of personal liability. Public land managers have the same concern. **Maintained private airstrips are one of a pilot's best choices for an emergency or precautionary landing. Providing an incentive to a landowner to keep and maintain an airstrip is in the best interests of public safety.**

Recreational flying is a growth tourist industry in Montana, with pilots and their passengers coming from all over the country to participate in the Montana recreational experience. As this activity grows, more landing areas will be required to facilitate the dispersal of use over the landscape. Many airstrip owners would be amenable to opening their landing strips to the public, just as they allow other recreational uses like hunting and fishing, if it were not for the concern of being the subject of unfounded lawsuits.

I urge you to give SB 318 a "do pass" recommendation.